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October 23, 1980

COMPUTER AIDS BAPTIST
WOMEN CLERGY.

NEW YORK -- The Church Deployment Board of the Episcopal Church, which is
committed to full use of the most modern deployment policies as it seeks to provide place-
ment services for clergy and congregations, has been encouraged by the results of a recent
study by American Baptist Churches which indicate that its computerized data bank was "the
most important of all factors in the actual placement of ordained women."

The Rev. Roddey Reid, Jr., director of the Church Deployment Office at the Episcopal
Church Center, said that the study shows that when the Baptist Churches' national deployment
system -- which is similar to the Episcopal Church's -- was relied on by ordained women in
the Baptist Churches, the data bank was of "immense help in providing placement services."
Women who did not use those services were more likely to fail to find a position.

The study found that women in that denomination were less likely to use the national
deployment office than men and also less likely to report that the office was helpful, Reid
said. None of the 1977 senior women seminarians who did not use the national system were
placed whereas two-thirds of those who did were placed.

The study further notes that the American Baptist women seem to believe that the for-
mal structures of the church are relatively unresponsive and therefore they tend to go the route
of informal contacts, Reid said. The evidence shows, however, that no matter how "respon-
sive" the informal contacts are, they cannot provide what is needed for placement -- "visi-
bility" and "credibility" -- which a national system can and does provide.

Edward C. Lehman, the author of the report, said that participation in the American
Baptist system "gives a candidate an air or image of 'legitimacy.' " Such a participant "pro-
jects an image of 'playing by the rules' and therefore an image of a person who can be trusted
to participate in (and cooperate with) the denomination. . . ."

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Those who declined to be a part of the national deployment system "not only end up avoiding a mechanism for obtaining visibility, but also take on a negative image, one of 'unwillingness to cooperate with the system,' and they thereby diminish their chances of being seriously considered at various points in the placement process," the study revealed.

Lehman reports that Dr. Adair Loomis of the Hartford Seminary Foundation says that women especially need the formal legitimation of the national computer placement service, since their credibility as candidates is far less well established with local churches and area ministers in charge of deployment than is the credibility of male candidates.

Lehman's findings for the American Baptists on the importance of using the national computer, in the placement of women candidates especially, are being replicated in work he is currently doing for the United Presbyterian Church. Dr. Loomis said that in her opinion the Lehman findings would "probably parallel the situation of Episcopal clergywomen and also for black Episcopal priests."

Reid reports that more than 90 percent of all clergy who are active in the Episcopal Church are registered in its data bank, though less than half the women clergy are registered.

Reid said that a directory of women clergy in the Episcopal Church will be published next January by the Church Deployment Board. The directory will list the ordained women alphabetically and by diocese.

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